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(54) **SMART PLAYLIST**

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(58) **Field of Classification Search**

None

See application file for complete search history.

(56)

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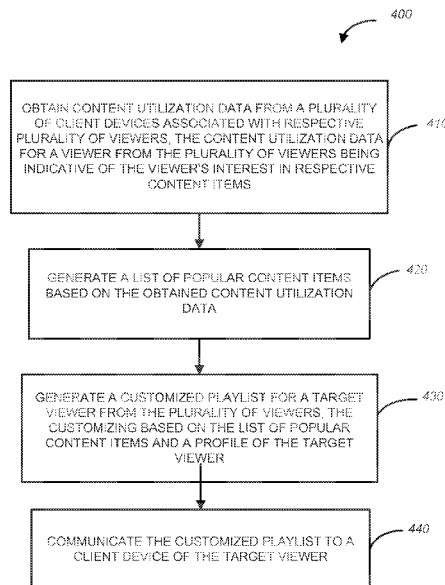
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(57)

ABSTRACT

A smart playlist system is described. In one example embodiment, a collector module obtains content utilization data from a plurality of client devices associated with respective plurality of viewers. A hot list generator module generates a list of popular content items based on the obtained content utilization data. A customization module generates a customized playlist for a target viewer from the plurality of viewers, based on the list of popular content items and a profile of the target viewer. The communications module communicates the customized playlist to a client device of the target viewer.

20 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



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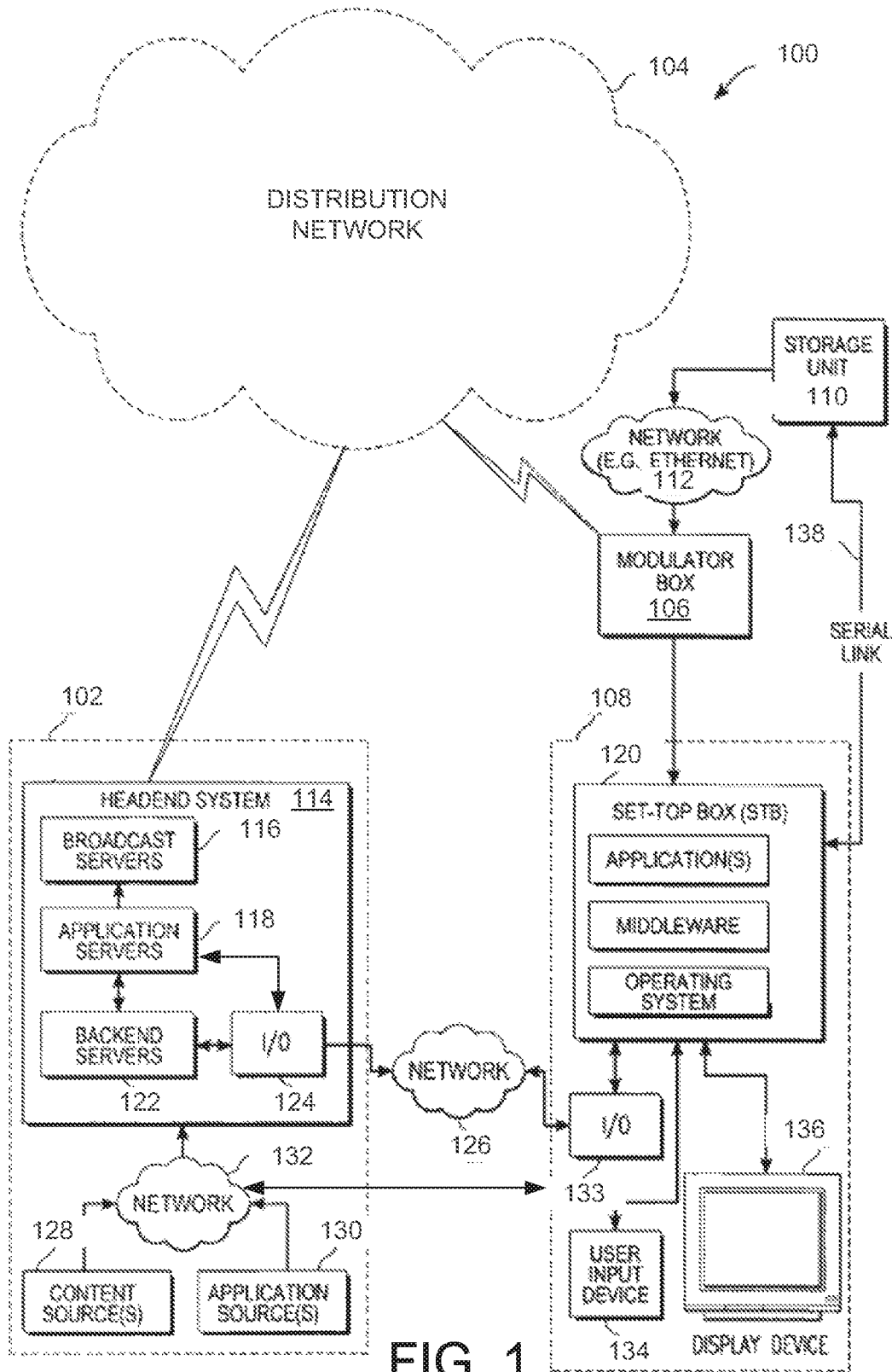


FIG. 1

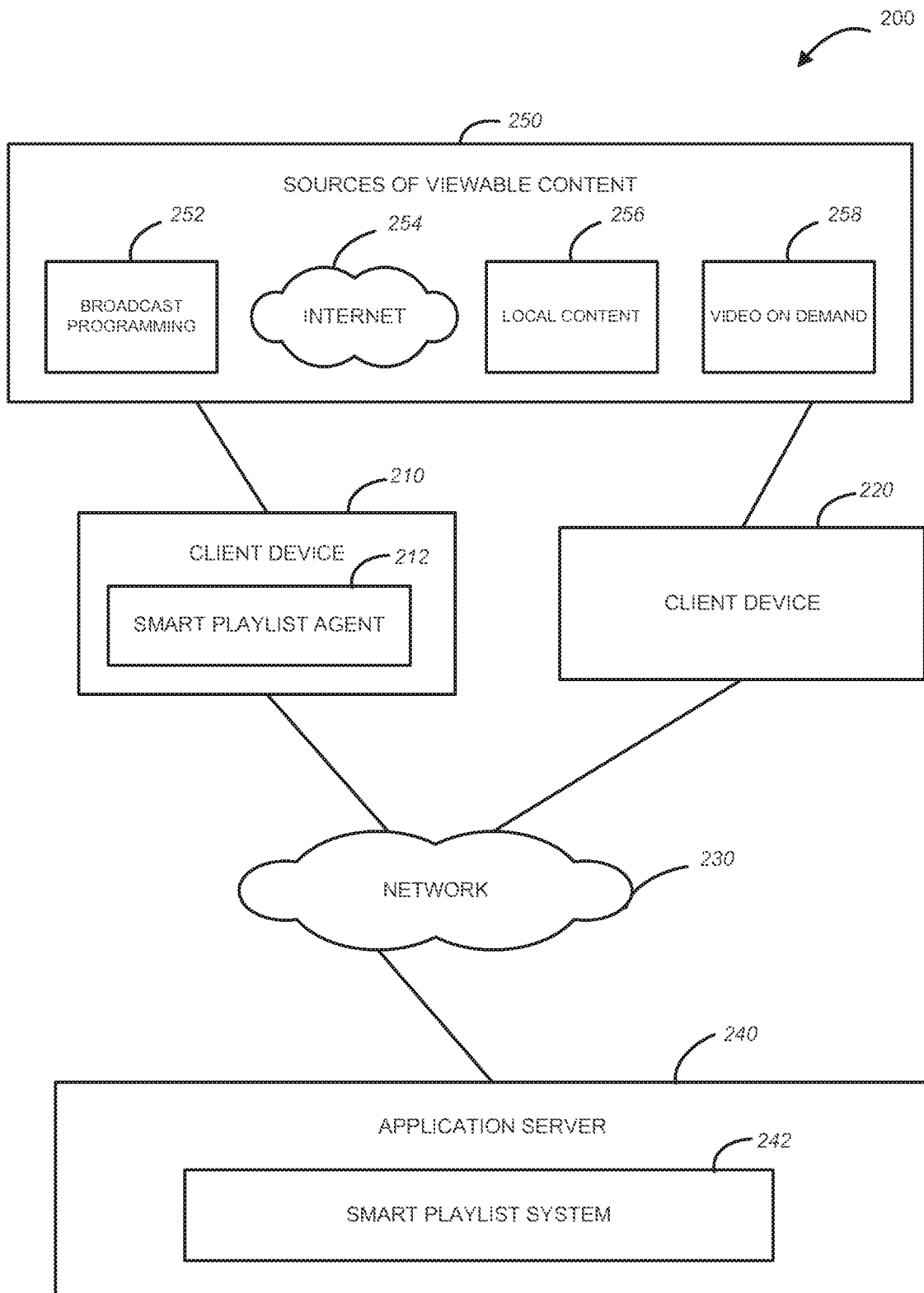


FIG. 2

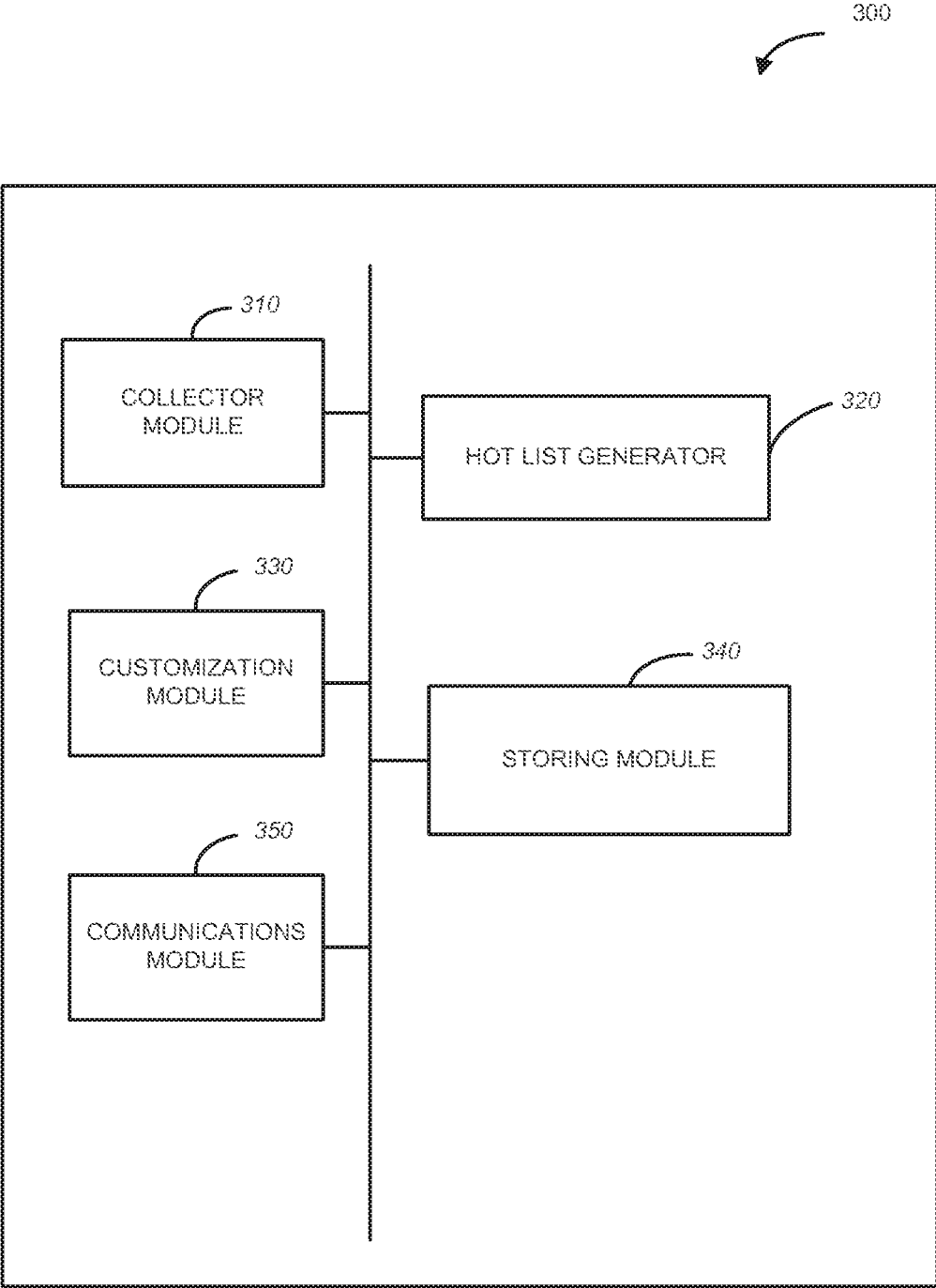


FIG. 3

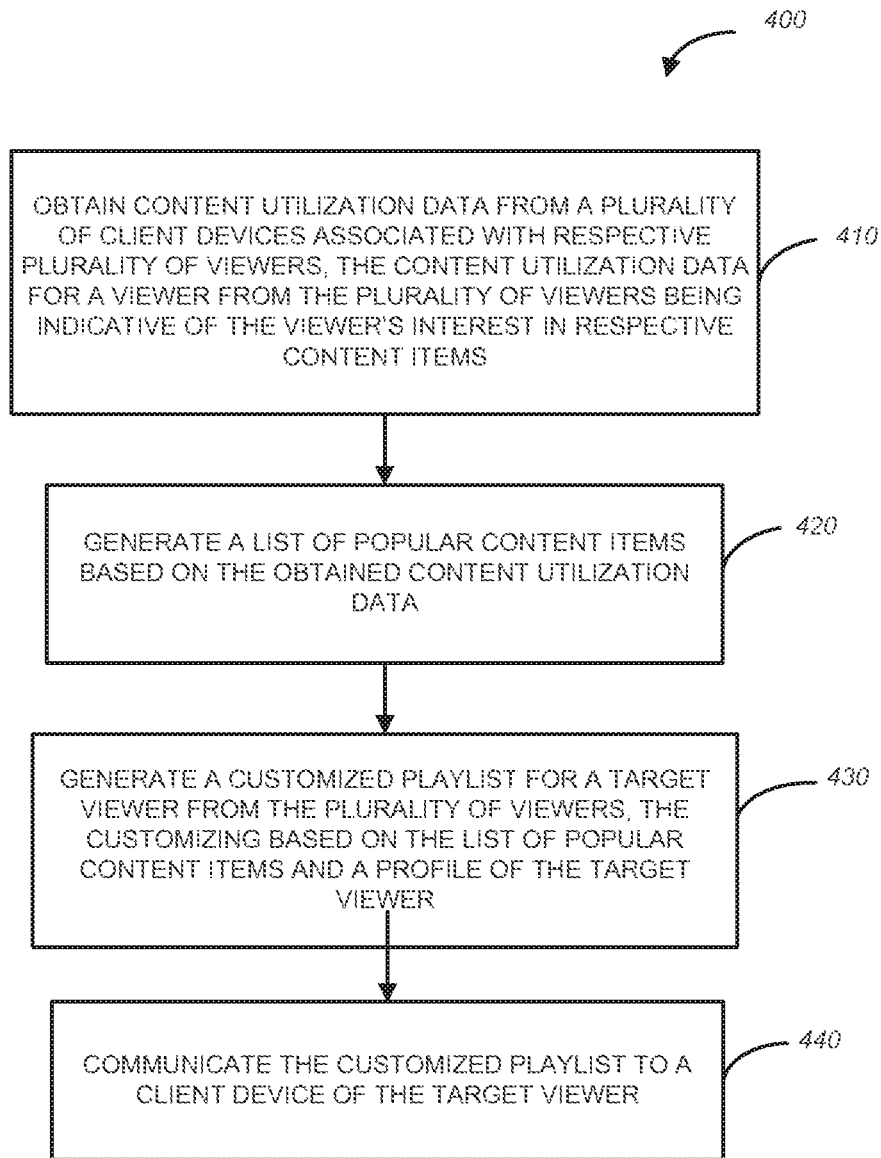


FIG. 4

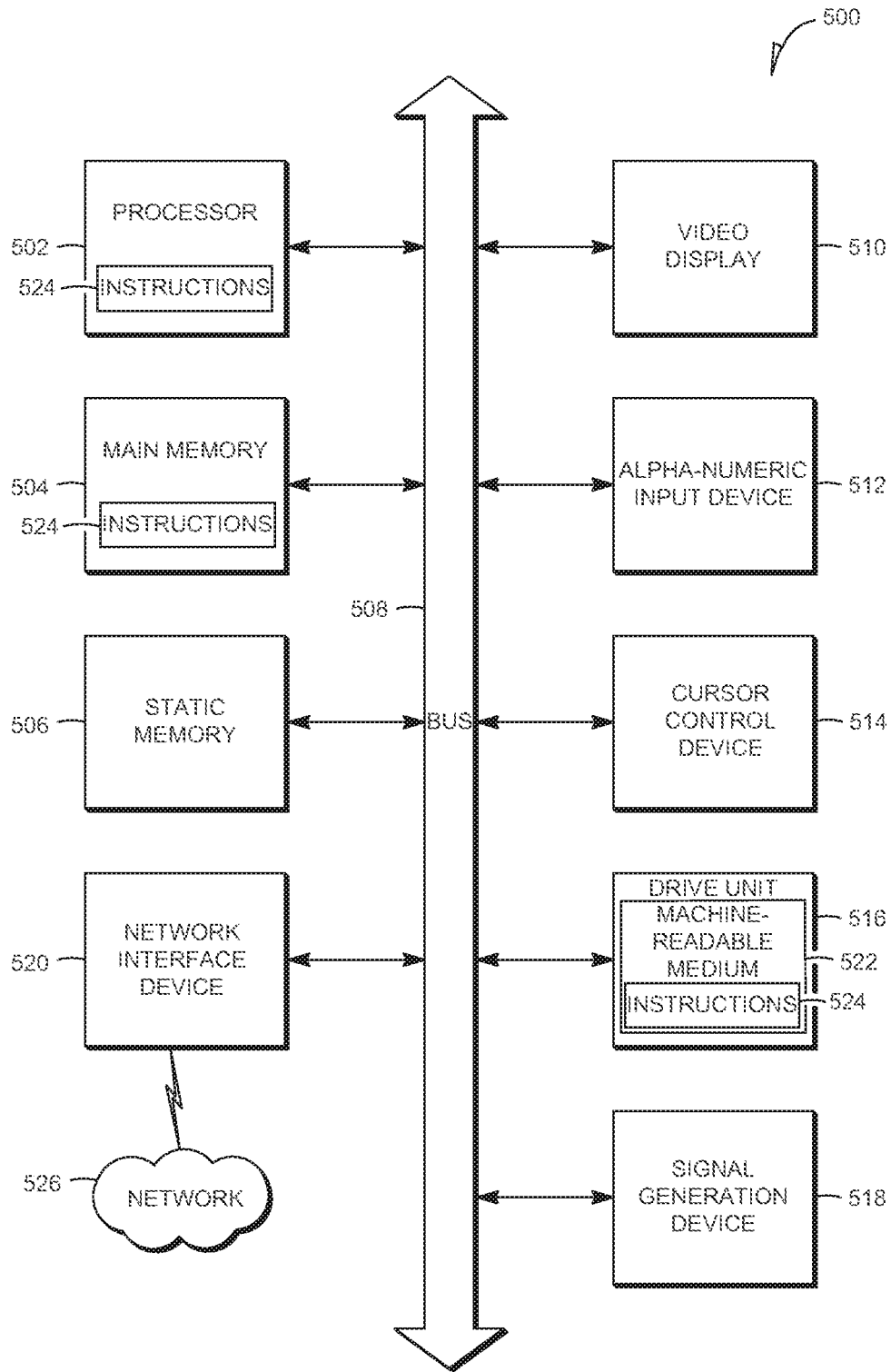


FIG. 5

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SMART PLAYLIST

PRIORITY APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. patent applica- 5
 tion Ser. No. 15/637,561, filed on Jun. 29, 2017, which is a
 continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/877,034,
 filed on Sep. 7, 2010, which applications are incorporated
 herein by reference in their entireties.

TECHNICAL FIELD

This application relates to the fields of media and enter-
 tainment and specifically to a smart play list system.

BACKGROUND

The approaches described in this section could be pur-
 sued, but are not necessarily approaches that have been
 previously conceived or pursued. Therefore, unless other-
 wise indicated herein, the approaches described in this
 section are not prior art to the claims in this application and
 are not admitted to be prior art by inclusion in this section.

In the field of media and entertainment, there is a new
 generation of viewers that has a high expectation of the level
 of entertainment to be enjoyed from various sources of
 content, such as, e.g., television programming, the Internet,
 and locally stored content. These viewers may expect more
 choice, more flexibility, as well as the ability to interact and
 participate more with the viewable content.

On the other hand, the sheer volume of content that is
 available for viewing is exploding dramatically. Just the
 number of television channels that are now available is
 almost unmanageable. The amount of content that is avail-
 able via free video or video on demand service is also
 increasing. It is now possible to view content over a wider
 span of time by employing time shifting technologies, such
 as Personal Video Recording (PVR) (sometimes referred to
 as DVR or Digital Video Recording). This explosion of
 content may be described as a paradox of choice, where the
 excess of choices causes a viewer's inability to choose.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Embodiments are illustrated by way of example and not
 limitation in the figures of the accompanying drawings, in
 which like references indicate similar elements and in
 which:

FIG. 1 illustrates an environment within which an
 example smart playlist may be implemented, in accordance
 with an example embodiment;

FIG. 2 is a network diagram illustrating architecture
 within which a smart playlist may be utilized, in accordance
 with an example embodiment;

FIG. 3 is a block diagram illustrating a smart playlist
 system, in accordance with an example embodiment;

FIG. 4 is a flow chart illustrating a method for providing
 a smart playlist to a viewer's client device, in accordance
 with an example embodiment; and

FIG. 5 illustrates a diagrammatic representation of a
 machine in the example form of a computer system within
 which a set of instructions, for causing the machine to
 perform any one or more of the methodologies discussed
 herein, may be executed.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The description that follows includes systems, methods,
 techniques, instruction sequences, and computing machine

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program products that embody illustrative embodiments of
 the present invention. In the following description, for
 purposes of explanation, numerous specific details are set
 forth in order to provide an understanding of various
 embodiments of the inventive subject matter. It will be
 evident, however, to those skilled in the art that embodi-
 ments of the inventive subject matter may be practiced
 without these specific details. In general, well-known
 instruction instances, protocols, structures, and techniques
 have not been shown in detail.

A system is described to collect information from a great
 number of viewers' client devices, determine a list of
 popular content items based on the collected information,
 customize the list for a particular viewer, and send that list
 to the viewer's device. This approach to aiding a viewer in
 making choices in the universe of viewable content may be
 termed a smart playlist system. Example embodiments
 described herein provide systems and methods to generate a
 smart play list.

In one embodiment, a smart playlist system obtains from
 viewers' client devices content-related information such as,
 e.g., which programs are being currently viewed, which
 programs are being recorded and scheduled to be recorded,
 which content has been rated and the associated ratings, as
 well as recommendations pertaining to programs, purchases
 of various programs, etc. For the purposes of this description
 the terms content, content item, show, and program will be
 understood to denote viewable content. Data collected indis-
 criminate from the entire accessible community of viewers
 may be accumulated in a repository termed a global bucket.
 Data from the global bucket may be analyzed to determine
 programs that appear to be most popular at the time of the
 analyzing, i.e., appear to be of heightened interest to view-
 ers. A certain number of programs that have been determined
 as most popular are compiled into a so-called hot list. The
 hot list may be made available to viewer, e.g., by commu-
 nicating the list to the viewers' client devices or providing
 an access link that can be invoked from the users' devices.

Before a hot list is provided to a viewer, it may be
 personalized for the viewer by determining how relevant the
 items in the hot list are to that particular viewer and
 presenting to the viewer only those programs that have been
 determined to be of high relevance to the viewer. The
 relevancy of a particular program to a particular viewer may
 be determined by associating each item in the hot list with
 a score based on the viewer's profile, on the viewer's content
 viewing history and patterns, as well as based on informa-
 tion collected from the client devices of a subset of viewers
 who are members of the particular viewer's social network.

In one example embodiment, in addition to determining a
 personalized hot list of content items, a smart playlist system
 may trigger recording of a certain program as soon as the
 program has been identified as a live program and of high
 relevance to the viewer. For example, a viewer may not be
 tuned into a channel broadcasting a particular live sports
 event. If the smart playlist system determined that the live
 sports event is of high relevance to the viewer, the smart
 playlist system may trigger the recording of the live broad-
 cast of the sports event on the viewer's client device (e.g.,
 a set top box, a desktop computer, etc.) and also alerts the
 user to the fact that she may be interested in the event being
 currently broadcast on a certain channel. The viewer may
 then ignore the alert. If the viewer, instead, tunes to the
 suggested channel the viewer would not have missed the
 beginning of the broadcast because the recording of the
 program has been automatically triggered by an instruction
 provided to the viewer's client device from the smart playlist

system. In one example, the high relevancy of the live broadcast may have been determined based on the fact that all of the viewer's social network contacts have either tuned into the associated channel or have scheduled the recording of the broadcast. In another example, the high relevancy of the live broadcast may have been determined based on the viewer's profile or on the viewer's viewing history. An example smart playlist system may be implemented within architecture illustrated in FIG. 1.

FIG. 1 illustrates network architecture of an example interactive media environment 100 wherein some embodiments of the present invention may be deployed. The interactive media environment 100 includes a source system 102 that communicates data (e.g., media content data and interactive application data) via a distribution network or system 104 (e.g., the Internet, a mobile communication network, or any other network capable of communicating digital data) and a modulator box 106 to a receiver system 108. In one example embodiment, the interactive media environment 100 optionally includes a storage unit 110 (e.g., personal computer) that communicates stored data via a network 112 to the modulator box 106 which, in turn, communicates the stored data, media content data, and interactive application data to the receiver system 108. The modulator box 106, storage unit 110, and the receiver system 108 may be co-located in a user's home. Thus, in one embodiment, the modulator box 106 may combine media content data and interactive application data received from the remote source system 102 with a local stored data provided by the storage unit 110 provided at the user's home.

Turning first to the source system 102, an example headend system 114 operates to communicate the data as a broadcast transmission. To this end, the headend system 114 is shown to include one or more broadcast servers 116 and, optionally, one or more application servers 118. Each of the broadcast servers 116 may operate to receive, encode, packetize, multiplex, modulate, and broadcast data from various sources and of various types. While the example embodiment is described herein as transmitting data from the headend system 114 as a broadcast, it will be appreciated that the relevant data could also be unicast or multicast from the source system 102 via the distribution system 104 and modulator box 106 to the receiver system 108. In various embodiments, data could also be transmitted from the source system 102 via a network connection to the receiver system 108. Further, in other example embodiments the source system 102 may be modified to facilitate communications via the Internet, a mobile phone network, or any other network capable of communicating digital data.

Each application server 118, in one example embodiment, compiles and provides interactive data modules to the broadcast server 116. The interactive data modules may also include data that is utilized by an interactive television application. The application server 118 may also include multiplexing functionality to enable multiplexing of, for example, interactive television applications and associated data with audio and video signals received from various sources. The application server 118 may also have the capability to feed (e.g., stream) multiple interactive television applications to one or more broadcast servers 116 for distribution to the receiver system 108. To this end, each application server 118 may implement a so-called "carousel," whereby code and data modules are provided to a broadcast server 116 in a cyclic, repetitive manner for inclusion within a transmission from the headend system 114. In other embodiments, code may reside permanently in

a set-top box (STB) 120 (e.g., the code may be stored in non-volatile memory of the STB 120), may be pushed or downloaded to the STB 120, or be provided to the STB 120 in any other manner. In one embodiment, the application server 118 provides a smart playlist mechanism to collect information from viewers, determine a list of popular content items, customizing the list for a particular user and sending that list to the user's device. The smart playlist mechanism will be discussed by way of example in more detail in connection with FIGS. 2-4.

The headend system 114 is also shown, by way of example, to include one or more backend servers 122, which are coupled to the application servers 118 and to an input/output device 124 (e.g., a modem pool). Specifically, the I/O device 124 is coupled to receive data from the receiver system 108 via a network 126 (e.g., the Internet) and to provide this data to backend servers 122. The backend servers 122 may then provide the data, received from the receiver system 108, to the application servers 118 and the broadcast servers 116. Alternatively, data received from the receiver system 108 may be directly provided to the application servers 118.

Accordingly, the network 126 and the I/O device 126 may operate as a return channel whereby the receiver system 108 is provided with interactivity with the source system 102. Data provided to the headend system 114 via the return channel may include, merely for example, user input to an interactive media application executed at the receiver system 108 or data that is generated by the receiver system 108 and communicated to the source system 102. The return channel may also provide a channel whereby programs, targeted advertisements/commercials, and applications from the source system 102 are provided to the receiver system 108.

Within the source system 102, the headend system 114 is also shown optionally to receive data (e.g., content, code, and application data) from external sources. For example, the headend system 114 may be coupled to one or more content sources 128 and one or more application sources 130 via a network 132 (e.g., the Internet). For example, a content source 128 may be a provider of entertainment content (e.g., movie), a provider of real-time dynamic data (e.g., weather information), and the like. The application source 130 may be a provider of any interactive media application. For example, one or more application sources 130 may provide a TV media player application, electronic program guide and navigation applications, messaging and communication applications, information applications, and so forth. The application sources 130 may be configured to execute on different client devices (e.g., mobile phones, personal computer, STBs, or the like).

Turning now to the example distribution system 104, the distribution system 104 may, in one embodiment, support the broadcast distribution of data from the source system 102 to the receiver system 108. As shown, the distribution network or system 104 may comprise a satellite, cable, terrestrial or Digital Subscribers Line (DSL) network, or any other data communication network or combination of such networks.

The receiver system 108 is shown, in one example embodiment, to include the set-top box (STB) 120 that receives data (e.g., primary and secondary content streams) via the distribution system 104 and modulator box 106 and an input/output device 132 (e.g., modem) for return channel communications with the headend system 114. The receiver system 108 is also shown to include other optional external systems such as a user input device 134 (e.g., a keyboard, remote control, mouse etc.) and a display device 136,

coupled to the set-top box **120**, for the display of content received at the set-top box **120**. In one example embodiment, the display device **136** may be a television set.

The modulator box **106**, in one example embodiment, receives stored data from the storage unit **110** and a broadcast transmission from the source system **102**. The modulator box **106** multiplexes the stored data into the broadcast transmission thereby generating a second transmission that is communicated to the receiving system **108**. It will, however, be appreciated that storage unit functionality is optional. The storage unit **110** may store data and, upon request, communicate the stored data to the modulator box **106** over the network **112** (e.g., Ethernet). The storage unit **110** may communicate the stored data in response to commands that are entered by a user from the set-top box **120** and communicated to the storage unit **110** over a link **138**.

It will be appreciated to one skilled in the art that one or more of the modules, applications, or the like of the modulator box **106**, the set-top box **120**, and the storage unit **110** may be combined or integrated. In general components, protocols, structures, and techniques not directly related to functions of example embodiments have not been shown or discussed in detail. The description given herein simply provides a variety of example embodiments to aid the reader in an understanding of the systems and methods used herein. While the interactive media environment **100** is illustrated having a receiving system **108** including a set-top box **120**, it is noted that the receiving system **108** may comprise a mobile device or a personal computer coupled to a network for receiving media.

Smart playlist may be utilized beneficially in the context of a network environment. FIG. **1** illustrates an environment **100** within which an example smart play list may be implemented. The environment **100** includes a set top box **110** in communication with an entertainment display device **120** and a control device **130**. The set-top box (STB) **110** may be a device that connects to a television and an external source of signal, turning the signal into content which can then be displayed on the television screen. In one example embodiment, the entertainment display device **120** is a television set, and the control device **130** is a remote control device that may be used for switching between television channels, for example. The set-top box **110** may be configured to include a system **112** to provide a smart playlist that may include features outlined above. The set-top box **110** may be configured to receive content from sources such as, e.g., an Ethernet cable, a satellite dish, a coaxial cable, a telephone line (including digital subscriber line (DSL) connections), Broadband over Power Line, as well as very high frequency (VHF) or ultra high frequency (UHF) antenna. Content, in this context, could mean any or all of video, audio, Internet web pages, interactive games, or other possibilities. As shown in FIG. **1**, the set-top box **110** is shown as having access to signal sources **140**, including broadcast programming **142**, video on demand programs **144**, as well as to local content **146** and Internet content **148**.

FIG. **2** is a network diagram illustrating architecture **200** within which a smart play list may be utilized, in accordance with an example embodiment. The architecture **100** includes a client device **210** and a client device **220**, each configured to receive content from content sources **250** and to be in communication with a server system **240** via a communications network **230**. The client devices **210** and **220** may be set top boxes, desktop computers, mobile devices, etc. The communications network **230** may be a public network (e.g., the Internet, a wireless network, etc.) or a private network (e.g., a local area network (LAN), a wide area network

(WAN), Intranet, etc.). The server **240** may include a smart playlist system **242** configured to collect information related to utilization of viewable content from viewers' client devices, to aggregate and customize the collected information, and to provide the resulting hot list to viewers personalized for each particular user, as was described above.

The client device **210** may be configured to include a smart playlist agent **212** that may be configured to cooperate with the smart playlist system **242** with respect to collecting information regarding viewable content accessed or referenced on the client device **210**. In some embodiments, the smart playlist system **242** may be configured to obtain information regarding viewable content accessed or referenced on a client device without the use of a smart playlist agent. As shown in FIG. **2**, the client devices **210** and **220** have access to signal sources **250**. The signal sources **250** include broadcast programming **252**, video on demand programs **254**, as well as to local content **256** and Internet content **258**. An example system to generate a smart playlist may be described with reference to FIG. **2**.

FIG. **3** illustrates an example system **300** to generate a smart playlist based on content utilization information collected from client devices of the entire community of users that can be accessed by the smart play list system. The system **300** includes a collector module **310**, a hot list generator **320**, a customization module **340**, and a communications module **350**. The collector module **310** may be configured to obtain content utilization data from a plurality of client devices (e.g., the client devices **210** and **220** of FIG. **2**). The content utilization data for a viewer from the plurality of viewers may be indicative of the viewer's interest in respective content items. In one embodiment, the collector module **310** obtains content utilization data from a real time listener provided at a client device, e.g., the smart play list agent **212** of FIG. **2**. The hot list generator **320** may be configured to generate a list of popular content items based on the obtained content utilization data.

The collector module **310** obtains content utilization information from all client devices accessible to the smart playlist system **300**. This information, collected from the entire universe of viewers that have diverse tastes, viewing habits, and content source preferences and that reflects content utilization of the entire viewing community, is stored, by a storing module **340**, in a repository termed a global bucket. The data from the global bucket is analyzed by the hot list generator **320** to determine those content items that are of most interest to the global community of viewers and assemble those content items into a list of popular items, a so-called hot list. In one embodiment, the hot list generator **320** may generate a hot list based on how many viewers are watching or recording a show, the duration of the watching, ratings and recommendations associated with the program, and so on. As the collector module **310** continuously obtains content utilization data from client devices, the hot list generator **320** may be configured to continuously update the hot list, e.g., once a day or based on any predetermined time period.

The customization module **330** may be configured to customize the hot list that is generated based on the information from the global bucket that reflect preferences of the entire community of viewers to target more closely the actual and projected preferences of a particular viewer (a target viewer) and generate a so-called customized playlist. The customizing may be based on the viewer's profile that may be stored at the application server **240** of FIG. **2**, as well as on the viewing history of the viewer and the viewing history of members of the viewer's social network. In one

embodiment, the storing module **340** stores content utilization data for individual viewers in respective repositories termed personal buckets. A viewer's profile stored at the application server **240** may indicate that one or more other viewers are associated with the viewers as "friends" in terms of social networking. The storing module **340** stores content utilization data collected from client devices of the viewer's "friends" or social connections in a repository termed a social bucket. The customization module **330** may utilize data from the viewer's personal bucket and the viewer's social bucket to generate the customized playlist. The customization module **330** may be configured to periodically update the customized playlist, e.g., based on the changes in the hot list, based on the changes in the data stored in the personal bucket and the social bucket, as well as based on the changes in the viewer's profile.

In one embodiment, a customized playlist is generated by generating a score for each item from the list of popular content items and including items into in the customized playlist based on respective scores of the items from the list of popular content items. The scoring may be based on the viewer's preferences identified in the viewer's profile, based on data from the viewer's personal bucket and the viewer's social bucket. A content item from a category that is not indicated in the viewer's profile as being of interest to the viewer and that is not considered as being of interest to the viewer based on the viewing history of the viewer may still be assigned a high score by the customization module **330** based on the information from the viewers social bucket. For example, the customization module **330** may be configured to weigh heavily an indication that a certain content item is of high interest to a great number of the viewer's social contacts.

The communications module **350** may be configured to communicate the customized playlist to a client device of the target viewer. The communications module **350** may be configured to communicate to the client device an instruction to start recording of a live program identified in the customized playlist. The communications module **350** may also be configured to communicate to the client device an instruction to display an alert message regarding of a live program identified in the customized playlist. As mentioned above, a client device may be a set top box, a desktop computer, or a mobile device. Content items referenced in the hot list or in the customized playlist may be associated with a variety of content sources, such as, e.g., the Internet, video on demand, and live broadcast. Example operations performed by the system **400** may be described with reference to FIG. **4**.

FIG. **4** illustrates an example method **400** of providing a smart playlist. The method **400** may be performed in the context of media and entertainment, e.g., in the context of television entertainment. The method **400** may be performed by processing logic that may comprise hardware (e.g., dedicated logic, programmable logic, microcode, etc.), software (such as run on a general purpose computer system or a dedicated machine), or a combination of both. It will be noted, that, in an example embodiment, the processing logic may reside in any of the modules shown in FIG. **3**.

As shown in FIG. **4**, the method **400** commences with operation **410**, where the collector module **310** of FIG. **3** obtains content utilization data from a plurality of client devices associated with respective plurality of viewers. At operation **420**, the hot list generator **320** of FIG. **3** generates a list of popular content items based on the obtained content utilization data. At operation **430**, the customization module **330** of FIG. **3** generates a customized playlist for a target

viewer from the plurality of viewers, based on the list of popular content items and a profile of the target viewer. At operation **440**, the communications module **340** of FIG. **3** communicates the customized playlist to a client device of the target viewer.

FIG. **5** shows a diagrammatic representation of machine in the example form of a computer system within which a set of instructions, for causing the machine to perform any one or more of the methodologies discussed herein, may be executed. In alternative embodiments, the machine operates as a standalone device or may be connected (e.g., networked) to other machines. In a networked deployment, the machine may operate in the capacity of a server or a client machine in server-client network environment, or as a peer machine in a peer-to-peer (or distributed) network environment. The machine may be a personal computer (PC), a tablet PC, a set-top box (STB), a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), a cellular telephone, a web appliance, a network router, switch or bridge, or any machine capable of executing a set of instructions (sequential or otherwise) that specify actions to be taken by that machine. Further, while only a single machine is illustrated, the term "machine" shall also be taken to include any collection of machines that individually or jointly execute a set (or multiple sets) of instructions to perform any one or more of the methodologies discussed herein.

The example computer system **500** includes a processor **502** (e.g., a central processing unit (CPU), a graphics processing unit (GPU) or both), a main memory **504** and a static memory **506**, which communicate with each other via a bus **508**. The computer system **500** may further include a video display unit **510** (e.g., a liquid crystal display (LCD) or a cathode ray tube (CRT)). The computer system **500** also includes an alphanumeric input device **512** (e.g., a real or virtual keyboard), a viewer interface (UI) navigation device **514** (e.g., a remote control or a mouse), a disk drive unit **516**, a signal generation device **518** (e.g., a speaker) and a network interface device **520**.

The disk drive unit **516** includes a machine-readable medium **522** on which is stored one or more sets of instructions and data structures (e.g., software **524**) embodying or utilized by any one or more of the methodologies or functions described herein. The software **524** may also reside, completely or at least partially, within the main memory **504**, within the processor **502** during execution thereof by the computer system **500**, the main memory **504** and the processor **502** also constituting machine-readable media. The main memory **504** comprises storage locations that are addressable by the processor **502** for storing software program code. The memory may comprise a form of random access memory (RAM). Those skilled in the art will appreciate that other memory means, such as FLASH memory media, may also be used for storing the program instructions and data structures shown in the main memory **504**.

The software **524** may further be transmitted or received over a network **526** via the network interface device **520** utilizing any one of a number of well-known transfer protocols (e.g., HTTP).

While the machine-readable medium **522** is shown in an example embodiment to be a single medium, the term "machine-readable medium" may be taken to include a single medium or multiple media (e.g., a centralized or distributed database, and/or associated caches and servers) that store the one or more sets of instructions. The term "machine-readable medium" shall also be taken to include any medium (e.g., FLASH memory media) that is capable of storing, encoding or carrying a set of instructions for execu-

tion by the machine and that cause the machine to perform any one or more of the methodologies of the present invention, or that is capable of storing, encoding or carrying data structures utilized by or associated with such a set of instructions. The term “machine-readable medium” shall

accordingly be taken to include, but not be limited to, solid-state memories, optical and magnetic media. The embodiments described herein may be implemented in an operating environment comprising software installed on a computer, in hardware, or in a combination of software and hardware.

Thus, method and system to generate and update a smart playlist have been described. In the description above, for purposes of explanation, numerous specific details have been set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of one example embodiment. It will be evident, however, to one skilled in the art that the present invention may be practiced without these specific details. It is to be noted that the delivery mechanism for the content for viewing may be via a satellite, cable, terrestrial broadcast, Internet, local storage, a local network, mobile telephony, or any other content distribution network. Accordingly, the viewing device need not be a television set but may be any display unit of any device (including portable devices). It will be noted that any references to television content will be understood to include any content available for viewing on an entertainment display device, such as a television screen. Such content may include television programming, as well as locally stored content, such as stored video files or digital images, as well as content accessible via the Internet. It will be noted that the term viewer may be understood broadly as any viewer of the system to navigate television content.

The invention claimed is:

1. A computer-implemented method comprising:
 - accessing a database to obtain content utilization data of a plurality of client devices, each client device associated with a respective viewer of a plurality of viewers, the plurality of viewers comprising a first viewer and a second viewer who is not identified as a member of a group;
 - generating, by a computer system, a list of popular content items based on the content utilization data;
 - customizing the list of popular content items to generate a customized playlist for the first viewer, the customizing comprising:
 - generating a score for each item from the list of popular content items based on a viewing history of the first viewer and on viewing histories of viewers who are identified as members of the group; and
 - including items in the customized playlist based on at least some of the scores of the items from the list of popular content items; and
 - based on the generating of the customized playlist, sending, by the computer system, to a client device of the first viewer, an instruction that causes the client device to perform an operation for an item of the items included in the customized playlist.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - communicating the customized playlist to the client device of the first viewer.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the sending of the instruction that causes the client device to perform the operation for the item comprises sending an instruction that causes initiation of recording of a live program identified in the customized playlist.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the sending of the instruction that causes the client device to perform the

operation for the item comprises sending an instruction that causes display of an alert message regarding a live program identified in the customized playlist.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the items in the customized playlist include at least one of a first item that identifies Internet content, a second item that identifies video on demand content, and a third item that identifies a live program.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the client device of the first viewer comprises a set top box, a desktop computer, or a mobile device.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the including of the items in the customized playlist is further based on a content category of interest to the first viewer.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the content utilization data of each client device indicates lengths of time during which the respective viewer has viewed content items.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the including of the items in the customized playlist comprises selecting the item for the customized playlist based on viewing histories of viewers who are identified as social connections of the first viewer indicating a high level of interest in the item.

10. A system comprising:

a memory that stores instructions; and

one or more processors configured by the instructions to perform operations comprising:

- accessing a database to obtain content utilization data of a plurality of client devices, each client device associated with a respective viewer of a plurality of viewers, the plurality of viewers comprising a first viewer and a second viewer who is not identified as a member of a group;

- generating a list of popular content items based on the content utilization data;

- customizing the list of popular content items to generate a customized playlist for the first viewer, the customizing comprising:

- generating a score for each item from the list of popular content items based on a viewing history of the first viewer and on viewing histories of the viewers who are identified as members of the group; and

- including items in the customized playlist based on at least some of the scores of the items from the list of popular content items; and

- based on the generating of the customized playlist, sending to a client device of the first viewer, an instruction that causes the client device to perform an operation for an item of the items included in the customized playlist.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the operations further comprise:

- communicating the customized playlist to the client device of the first viewer.

12. The system of claim 10, wherein the sending of the instruction that causes the client device to perform the operation for the item comprises sending an instruction that causes initiation of recording of a live program identified in the customized playlist.

13. The system of claim 10, wherein the sending of the instruction that causes the client device to perform the operation for the item comprises sending an instruction that causes display of an alert message regarding a live program identified in the customized playlist.

14. The system of claim 10, wherein the items in the customized playlist include at least one of a first item that

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identifies Internet content, a second item that identifies video on demand content, and a third item that identifies a live program.

15. The system of claim 10, wherein the client device of the first viewer comprises a set top box, a desktop computer, or a mobile device. 5

16. The system of claim 10, wherein the including of the items in the customized playlist is further based on a content category of interest to the first viewer.

17. The system of claim 10, wherein the content utilization data of each client device indicates lengths of time during which the respective viewer has viewed content items. 10

18. A machine-readable non-transitory storage medium storing instructions that, when executed by one or more processors of a machine, cause the machine to perform operations comprising: 15

accessing a database to obtain content utilization data of a plurality of client devices, each client device associated with a respective viewer of a plurality of viewers, the plurality of viewers comprising a first viewer and a second viewer who is not identified as a member of a group; 20

generating a list of popular content items based on the content utilization data;

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customizing the list of popular content items to generate a customized playlist for the first viewer, the customizing comprising:

generating a score for each item from the list of popular content items based on a viewing history of the first viewer and on viewing histories of the viewers who are identified as members of the group; and

including items in the customized playlist based on at least some of the scores of the items from the list of popular content items; and

based on the generating of the customized playlist, sending to a client device of the first viewer, an instruction that causes the client device to perform an operation for an item of the items included in the customized playlist.

19. The storage medium of claim 18, wherein the operations further comprise:

communicating the customized playlist to the client device of the first viewer.

20. The storage medium of claim 18, wherein the sending of the instruction that causes the client device to perform the operation for the item comprises sending an instruction that causes initiation of recording of a live program identified in the customized playlist.

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